

# THE HERITAGE OF THE ONE ROOM COUNTRY SCHOOL



**The Beet School, east of Chatsworth, Ill.**

**By Helen Louise Plaster Stoutemyer**

# THE HERITAGE OF THE ONE ROOM COUNTRY SCHOOL

The story of the Old Beet School during the  
past one hundred years.

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Cornbelt Press, Inc.  
Fairbury, Illinois, 61739  
1976





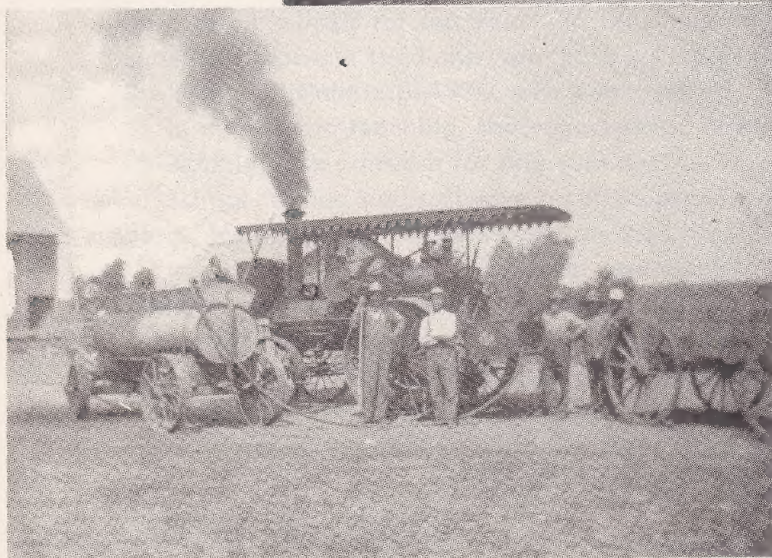
Old Beet School shortly after closing  
still with many trees - about 1947





Public School in the days teachers fenced pupils in.

Main Street - Schools dismissed for Corn Carnival.



Threshing Ring pic-nicked at school at end of season.

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LOUISE STOUTEMYER

#### FOREWORD

A bit about the author--Louise (Plaster) Stoutemyer is a retired school teacher. She graduated from the University of Illinois in 1928 and came to Chatsworth that fall to teach physical geography, physiology, botany, zoology and girls' physical education in the high school. For twenty seven years she taught in the field with slightly varying subjects, then was out of the class room on a regular basis for ten years, in the meantime doing some tutoring and substitute work. In 1965 she went back on a part time schedule and worked in the remedial field until 1970, when she retired.

In addition to teaching, she reported for fifteen years for the Chatsworth Plaindealer and edited it for one summer.

School related fields always received priority as she served on the library board for more than 20 years and on the school board for one term.

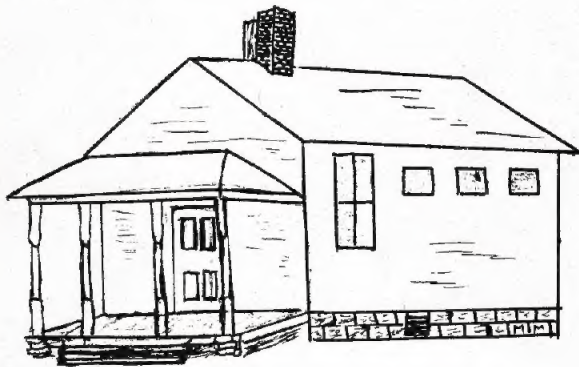
In writing this book, research was made of books available, former teachers of this school were interviewed, former pupils and their parents were contacted for information. Some had old pictures, papers and school programs they shared. So this book has truly been a community effort. It is hoped that it will shed some light and preserve for future generations the story of the one room school in general and of the Old Beet School in particular. Other books by the same author are "Centennial History of Chatsworth" 1967 and "The Train That Never Arrived" 1970.



# THE HERITAGE OF THE ONE ROOM COUNTRY SCHOOL

Purpose: This school has been moved, restored and refurbished as a museum, that future generations might know what a one-room country school once looked like. In addition to school items it contains home objects and tools of an earlier era, Chatsworth wreck items and things of historical interest.

## CHAPTER I GETTING THE IDEA



CHATSWORTH'S FIRST SCHOOLHOUSE

Sketch of First School by Myra Maplethorpe

It was the fall of 1958 it all began. In searching for interesting programs for the Chatsworth Parent Teachers' Association, the officers came across the information that the first schoolhouse was built in Chatsworth in 1858. Why not celebrate the Centennial?

The November P.T.A. meeting was built around the Centennial theme. Mrs. Joe Conibear, Mrs. Burnell Watson and Mrs. Clarence Pool arranged an exhibit of old school items, among them, school board minutes from 1861, a journal kept by Eliza Dorsey listing all the graduates from 1881 to 1938, the first commencement program of Chatsworth High School 1881, a number of old McGuffey readers, old pictures and other items.

Miss Jenny Cooney, a teacher from 1912 to 1918, sent a letter from Dallas, Texas and enclosed snapshots of her teaching days here. Miss Cooney had attended this school in 1896. Florinda Bauerle played a taped interview with Miss Marietta Parker, a graduate with the high school class of 1889, and long time country teacher. She recalled going to

Cullom by train and returning home on weekends.

Teachers who taught before 1925 were introduced at the meeting and given a ribbon of honor and the traditional polished red apple. They each spoke briefly and told of their many jobs such as janitor duties, carrying water, taking care of a sick or injured child, and enforcing discipline. Discipline was a real problem in the winter term. After corn husking, the "big" boys attended school. These 21 year olds were often older and much larger than the teacher. Some schools would only hire a man teacher for the winter term to manage the older boys.



Early Teachers

These early teachers attending were Miss Helena Franey, Mrs. Henry Hornickel, Miss Fannie Pierce, Mrs. William Sterrenberg, Mrs. Jerry Rosendahl, standing, and Miss Pearl Desmond, Mrs. Phil Hayes, Mrs. Henry Thorndyke, Mrs. John Kane, Mrs. Carl Milstead, seated, Mrs. Clarissa Kueffner (absent from picture).

A group of grandparents put on a skit "School Days". Mrs. John Kane presided as teacher and put the "children" through their paces. Her pupils were May Bennett, Elsie Milstead, Edith Zorn, Nellie Shafer, Elsie Miller, Augusta Sterrenberg, "Willie" Zorn, Arthur Collins and Clarence Bennett. Carl Milstead was the school director who came to visit, and John Heiken took the part of a Kickapoo Indian chief returning to the land of his ancestors. (This last



incident was based on fact. A Kickapoo, whose forebearers were removed from Kickapoo Grove (later known as Oliver's Grove) by the U.S. Government, did return to this area to look over the land taken from his people.) Music teacher, Keith Cluts, played the part of the Singing Master and led the audience in group singing.



School Play

As the pupils recited, they brought out the geography and the history of Chatsworth, but their antics led to the use of the switch and the dunce stool. The water bucket, dipper, wash pan were all stage props.

Assisting as costumed parents of an earlier era, visiting school, were Mrs. F.L. Livingston Sr., Mrs. Dan Kyburz, Mrs. Lowell Flessner, seated, Mrs. Frank Zorn, Mrs. Ben Saathoff, and Mrs. Ray Marr standing. Some of these had costumes as they had just celebrated the Charlotte Centennial. 245 guests signed the P.T.A. register. The play was written and directed by Mrs. Stoutemyer, president of the P.T.A.



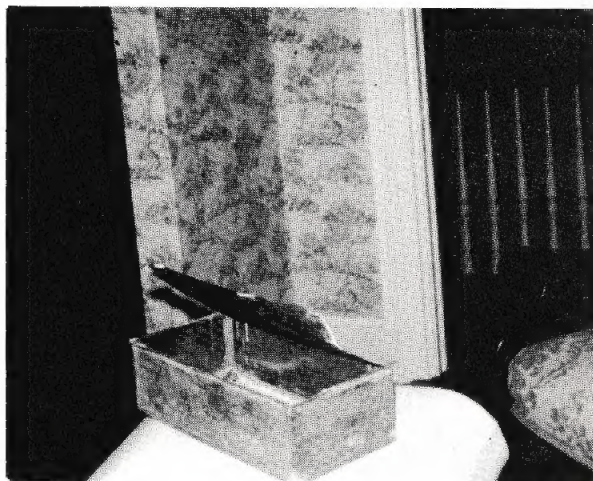
"Parents" in Costume

## DIGGING UP THE BOX

More research showed a box had been buried on the grade school grounds in 1929 and it was past time to dig it up. This custom began in 1889 with the planting of a tree and burial of a box of information to be dug up 15 years later. The first box was buried in 1889. Boxes were buried at irregular intervals-1901-1907-1914-1920-1929-1959.

Memories sometimes play tricks, the box is forgotten and a 25 year period or longer may elapse before anyone remembers the box.

School board members, Allen Diller and Burnell Watson, and others dug up the box that had been buried in the yard of the old grade school in 1929. Moisture had collected and papers were in bad condition, but it did have the names of all the students, people who attended the ceremony, and a copy of the Plaindealer among other things. The box was on display at the November P.T.A. meeting.



Buried 1929-dug up 1958

A tree was planted and another box was buried April 29, 1959 at the new grade school. It is past 15 years now since the burial of this box. It contained samples of work of the children of Unit #1, their pictures and their names, pictures and names of children of Saints Peter and Paul School, Plaindealers, a PTA program book, clippings about the new building, picture of Abraham Lincoln from the original box in 1889, signatures of high school students and faculty, pencil drawings, pennies from each year the box was buried, list of people at 1958 PTA Centennial meeting, copy of play presented, proclamation of the box, program of day's events, copy of Tatler, report card of 1959 valedictorian, 1959 commencement announcement and news clippings of important events.

1976, the Bicentennial year, is time to plant another tree and bury another box. Time designated to dig up that next box should be 1989, the 100th anniversary of the burial of the first box.

As the committee worked in preparation of this Centennial program, they discovered the fact that the first



little schoolhouse was still in existence. Someone suggested, "We ought to preserve it. Why don't we?" Well, why not? That was the spark of genius that touched off the idea that led to the eventual moving, preservation and restoration of the school as a museum.

## CHAPTER II FOLLOWING THROUGH

The germ of an idea about saving the little school was not lost, but it lay dormant, and nothing was done until after the town centennial, nearly 10 years later. In June 1967 the town celebrated its 100th birthday with parades, pageants, a huge birthday cake, exhibits and fire works. A history was written, costumes made and worn, pictures taken, a time capsule buried and all the other activities that usually go with a centennial.

After the centennial was over officials found they had a profit of nearly \$10,000. What to do with this and how to spend it wisely was the question. Requests were put out asking for suggestions. Many ideas were offered, but mostly they centered around recreation, particularly a swimming pool. It was with this in mind the CAPS (Chatsworth Area Planning Society) board was formed.

Many meetings were held. Eventually the Board purchased approximately 80 acres at the north edge of Chatsworth from LaVerne Dehm, across from the Diller Tile Factory. This was once part of the Bigham estate. John Bigham, an early settler, built the home that was later known as the Blaine property and the A.B. Koehler home. The house had been moved from its original site in the center of the acreage to the south edge of the property, where it still stands. Bigham's daughter was the famous Kate Bigham Brode, a school teacher, who wrote the book entitled "Life in Chatsworth", giving her recollection of things as they were in the 1860's and '70's.

With the purchase of the CAPS property, the next step was to obtain permission from the CAPS board to grant a building site. This was readily given. The school house by this time had come into the ownership of Glenn Dehm. Schools were consolidated in 1947 and the country schools closed. In June 1950 all school property was sold at public auction. This particular building was sold to Ralph Watkins of Chicago for \$290. The windows were boarded up and the school was used for storage. Then the owner died and his widow wasn't interested in carrying out her husband's plan, whatever it was, for the building. So it became the property of Mr. Dehm. He agreed to making a gift of it and allowing its removal from his property. At this point the great need was money. Mrs. Stoutemyer suggested if each of her former pupils, who numbered over 1,000 would each give a dollar, it would be a start.

## FUND RAISING

Money came in from individual donations from as far away as Washington and Florida as people heard about it. Former pupils and teachers were the most interested. Organizations began to help-Chatsworth Homemakers

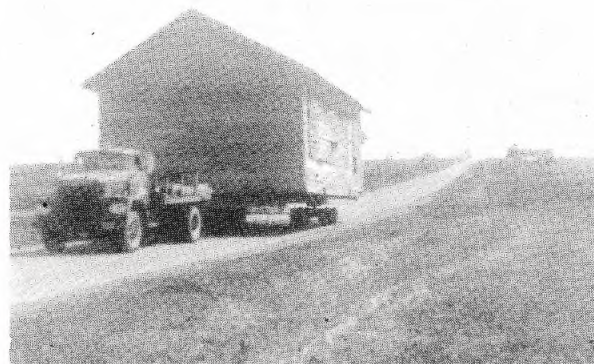
Extension Association, Lions Club, Woman's Club, Junior Woman's Club, PTA, United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church, Republican Club, Chamber of Commerce, all helped, as did the sale of items, interest on savings, and other sources, but NO tax money was used. Approximately \$2,400 was donated and deposited in the School Museum savings account. Many gave more than the \$1.00, the largest donors gave \$50 each and some clubs contributed more than \$250.

At this time Jim Kessinger and Charles Culkin were most helpful. They contacted Harvey Peters at Farmer City and a contract was made to move the school for \$1,200. It was necessary to get permission to cross the highway and contact the telephone company to lower the wires to let the school pass over. Charles made arrangements with workmen. Finally on April 14, 1971, when everything was ready, the move was made.



Getting Ready

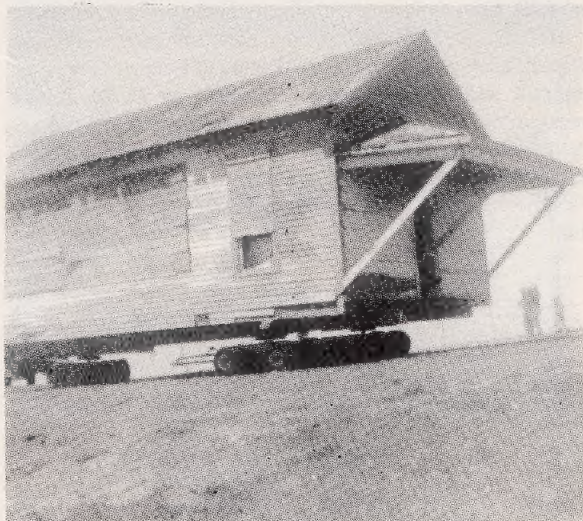
The school was lifted off its foundation on to rollers and then a low-boy. It was pulled out backwards, across Rt. 24, one mile north to the cemetery road, west to the Campus black top and south into CAPS, where wires were lowered to allow the school to pass. It was pulled into position just south of the swimming pool, which had already been built.



Down the Road



As soon as the building was located, Jim Kessinger and his crew of men, George Augsburg, Jim Fox, and Ken Ashman started to work on the foundation. They shingled the building, with old fashioned wooden shingles, built a dummy brick chimney and rebuilt the porch and steps. The Lutherans gave the porch posts from the Fred Schafer house they were demolishing for a parking lot east of the church.



Located at CAPS

For flooring, the men obtained some second hand lumber from a house being torn down by Russell Barker (the old Grosenbach house) and a door from Jack Stadler. It was originally the first grade door in the old public school. Jack had purchased the old grade school and torn it down for the lumber. The door that had belonged to this school had been stolen shortly before the school was moved.



Foundation Built and Roof on

In the early days, the school had two outdoor toilets or privies, one for the girls and one for the boys, but at some later date the school had been modernized and chemical toilets were installed inside. The cloak room had been divided off into two sections, with a hallway between to accommodate these. The toilets were removed, the floor rebuilt, partitions removed, and the room made into one large cloak room as it was originally built.

#### FINISHING THE INTERIOR

Frank Livingston was the next person to work. He started paneling the west wall. It had been lathed, plastered and papered in early days, but it would be difficult to find workmen for this, so it was decided to settle for wood paneling.

About this time Clarence and Dick Bennett obtained some blackboards from a grade school being torn down in Fairbury. Rev. Carl Fox, United Methodist minister, installed the black boards, built the chalk boards and continued working on the walls and ceiling. Sometimes he had help, Clarence Bennett, Virgil Culkin, Frank Albright, Jim Haberkorn, Bob Chayer, LaVerne Dehm, Norbert Listowski, Charles Haberkorn gave a ½ day now and then.



Blackboards

The windows were repaired and mesh placed over them, after a couple of them were broken with flying rocks. Allan Kietzman painted the window sashes and put on the mesh.

Then came the day of painting, but what color was it to be? Folks had been calling it "the Little Red Schoolhouse", but the majority wanted it white, so white it is. They were given a chance to decide by voting with ballots printed in the Plaindealer. Richard Dohman and his crew spray-painted the outside of the building. So it became known as "the Little Red Schoolhouse painted white".





Schoolhouse Painted White

It was a bleak day for the project when Rev. Fox moved away, as he had donated many hours working. After a time, Jim Wilson, working for Livingstons, had some time to spare and he finished the job of wood work.

A crew came in from the Lions Club who scraped paint, painted doors and around the windows and the porch floor. They sanded the floor and sealed it with oil sealer.

This group included Clarence Bennett, Ray McGreal, Virgil Culkin, Frank Albright, Dr. Willstead, Bill Zorn, Raymond and Terri Gerdes and Charles Culkin.



Lions Club Helpers

### CHAPTER III FURNISHINGS

After all the interior painting and carpenter work was done, the school was ready for furnishing.

A most coveted item was a teacher's desk. Miss Fannie Pierce had one. She had mentioned giving it to the little school, but had not done so before she died. In her will she had left almost everything to the Salvation Army. By letter writing and persistence in writing to relatives, the lawyer, and by contacting four individuals from the Salvation Army, the desk was finally obtained as a gift from the Army Brigadier Kennedy. Jim Elliott moved it to the school. The chair to go with the desk came from the old grade school, a gift of Bill Zorn.



Sanding the Floor



Miss Fannie's Desk

A recitation bench was donated by Myra and Lee Maplethorpe. Children were called up by classes to the recitation bench near the teacher to recite their lessons. Maplethorpes also gave a picture of George Washington that Myra had rescued from the trash heap at the old grade school, a framed story of the flag and a large dictionary.



Woman's Club



Woman's Club assisted by Dr. O.D. Willstead scrubbing seats

The seats are an assortment. Twenty four came from the old parochial school, St. Patrick's Academy. These had been

moved from the school basement to the priest's garage, then to the town garage, and to a shed at CAPS before finally being moved into the schoolhouse. Eight came from the old grade school, purchased by Mrs. Stoutemyer, three were a gift from Martha and Irvin Teter, and one was from Dorothy Spence Weaver, making a total of thirty-six. Some of these had been a long time in storage and were quite dirty. A committee from the Woman's Club worked hard to clean and polish them. This group included Mrs. William Livingston, Mrs. Ron Shafer, Florinda Bauerle, Mrs. Leonard Kerber, Mrs. Andrew Sutcliffe, Maude Edwards, Mrs. Robert Koehler, Mrs. John McGonigle, Mrs. George Augsburg, Mrs. William Durante, Mrs. Wilber Point, Mrs. O.D. Willstead, Mrs. Gus Hornickel, Mrs. Gene Gillette. Doc Willstead and Gary Durante helped out carrying water and with other chores.

Many who saw the room full of seats and remembering the last days of the country school with six or eight pupils, exclaimed over the great number of seats. Really, there weren't too many. One of the earliest teachers told of having 57 pupils in the Old Beet School.



Pot-bellied stove

The pot-bellied stove and stove pipe, real antique, was a gift of Charles Dennewitz. The Lions Club moved it and painted it and set it in place. Lee Maplethorpe was in on this job.

Marie Lindquist and Martha Teter gave some coat hooks for the cloak room and Clarence Bennett donated the wash pan. Glenn McKinley gave the roller for a towel. It came from the home of his great uncle Billy McKinley. Gladys Rosendahl made the roller towel to use on it.





Wash pan and Roller Towel



Coat hooks with Sunbonnets and Hats

Helena Franey gave the teacher's hand bell and the Chatsworth H.E.A. gave the large bell. Mrs. Stoutemyer gave a coal bucket and shovel to go with the stove and a church pew purchased from the old Methodist Church, the oldest church in town, organized in 1859, just a year after the school was built. In most of the church histories it said, "church was held in the schoolhouse before the church was built". The school was often called the "meeting house", as all types of meetings were held there.



Pew



Bell-

Bill Zorn furnished framed copies of the Declaration of Independence, preamble to the constitution and The Star Spangled Banner and a picture of the Lincoln memorial. Clarence Bennett was owner of a picture of a presidential inauguration, something that had originally belonged to Frank Bennett, and May Bennett gave a picture of Lincoln.

Numerous persons contributed books, among them Eunice Newton, Eula Lee, Ruth Kerber, Mrs. Viola Grosenbach, Mrs. Wesley Kiehm, Mrs. Ellsworth Dixon, Margaret Borgman Rose, Merna Miller, Mrs. Roy Hawthorne, Mrs. Fred Flessner, Sandy Hummel, Loretta Barker, Mrs. Winslow from Fairbury, Mrs. Francis Rebholz, Marilyn Groskreutz, Florinda Bauerle, Bob and Evelyn Koehler, Louise Stoutemyer, Mrs. William Durante and William Sterrenberg.

Gail Reynolds of Piper City gave a roll down map of Europe and the Durantes gave a globe.



Other museum items include a dasher churn, shell boards made by Clarence Frobish, from shells he collected in Florida when they spent the winters there, a painting by Ruth Zorn, a painting by Carrie Hall and one by Jo Hall, local artists, McGuffey readers, slates, trunk, carpet beater, ice cream dipper, story of Lincoln's assassination, given by Clara Game, she also gave a bucket and dipper, and a framed newspaper of "Siege of Vicksburg" donated by Irene Cording. Other items include newspapers about the Chatsworth wreck, two pieces of headlight from wrecked engine, one from estate of Bertha French, another from Madie Klehm, coal shovel from train, journal, cane, pictures and other items given to Mrs. Stoutemyer. There are also

tools, and a set of taxidermy tools, used by Mrs. Stoutemyer, an amateur taxidermist.

The Chatsworth library gave the school two book shelves, when they installed new ones. Clarence Bennett found some antique wooden brackets and put up a shelf for the water bucket and wash pan in the cloak room.



Water bucket and Lunch pails

Alice Albright gave a slate and pencil and rules for teachers and Angeline Bork Beneke gave a dinner bucket. Clara Gillette gave another type of lunch pail. Mrs. Glenn Heminover gave a bucket that had belonged to Leroy Hawthorne and Elva Koerner gave a bucket that had belonged to Phil Koerner and some syrup buckets. Louise Jensen and Mabel Flessner also gave syrup buckets. Frank Seward went to a great deal of trouble to obtain a bucket from Corn Products company.

Gladys Rosendahl gave a husking peg she had used at one time. Someone asked what did husking pegs have to do with school? A great deal! When it came corn husking time, the older boys and sometimes girls too had to stay out of school and get the crop harvested. It took six weeks or maybe longer to get the corn in.

Mrs. Rosendahl also gave a home-made wooden boot jack, that her husband Jerry had made to remove stubborn boots, a water pail and dipper and two low benches, used to hold the dinner buckets.

Phil Koerner gave a souvenir of Bushway's Store, which seems to be a handle and string for carrying packages, before the day of the shopping bag. Geraldine Cook gave a fan from Baylor's store.

There is also a neck yoke to aid a person carrying two buckets of milk and a cowbell. A horse collar is over the door and different types of horse shoes. There is also a soapstone footwarmer, carried in sleighs and buggies in the winter.

Horses played an important part getting folks to school. Teachers often drove horses and pupils rode ponies and



horses to school. A well trained horse could go home by itself

While teaching biology, Mrs. Stoutemyer, (Miss Plaster then) had many animals brought into the laboratory which students wanted to preserve. She took a correspondence course in taxidermy in order to stuff these birds and mammals for the high school, but times change. A new generation of pupils and teachers comes along. They want everything new and they don't want those "old things." They are in the way, so by request, the case of taxidermy items was moved to the little school. The case was a memorial gift of the class of 1932 and was built by Joe Wittler Sr. It was found to be too wide to go through the little school door and had to be taken apart and moved in pieces. Jim Wilson and Frank Livingston engineered the moving of the case.

Special items it contains are two young bald eagles, one was shot by Roy Edwards, Feb. 25, 1932, near his home in Charlotte. He saw the bird settle in a tree with many other birds trying to chase it away. He took his shot gun, drove slowly past in his car. Without stopping the car, he shot the large bird that measured 7 feet, two inches from tip to tip. Young bald eagles do not have a white head until their fourth year. They are sometimes confused with the Golden eagle, but Golden eagles have feathers all the way to the toes. It was sent to Chicago for mounting, and returned April 14. The other was shot by Raphael Monahan on Dennis Monahan farm while Ray was hunting crows in 1939. These birds are very scarce now and it is against the law to kill them. Another fine specimen is a snowy owl, a native of the far north. It came down in winter and flew into a barbed wire fence, killing itself. It was stuffed and added to the collection. There is a deer head over the door, purchased from Perry Virkler and other birds and mammals, the work of Mrs. Stoutemyer's taxidermy, collected over the thirty years of her teaching.



Case of Birds



Mammals



Snowy Owl

A double seat which was used before the single seats was donated by Phil Koerner. He said the first year or two he went to school they had double seats, then the County Superintendent ruled that schools must have single seats. Phil's father was a school director and he kept one of the old double seats, stored up in the attic. Phil and his wife cleaned it up, painted it and gave it to the school. Another double seat, which is even older, with wooden legs, came from the Pierces, brought by Charles Elliott.



Double Seat

The large dictionary bears the information "bought from box social fund December 1930 District 251". Sometime the district number was changed from district 9 to 251. In the cloak room is a large portable black board from old St. Patrick's Academy, a gift of Pat Haskins.

Virgil Culkin and Clarence Bennett furnished the lumber and built the platform for the teacher's desk. In early schoolhouses the teacher's desk was always elevated to give the school master or school "marm" a better view of the pupils. A former student reported this school had had a raised platform in earlier days.



Platform for Teacher

At the front of the room at the teacher's right is a flag, not a modern flag with 50 stars, but a bicentennial flag or Betsy Ross flag with 13 stars, arranged in a circle. Of course this flag was a much earlier design than one that would have been used in Dist. 251, but it is being used as the bicentennial flag. Below the flag is a map of Europe. To the flag's right is a picture of Lincoln, the inauguration of Teddy Roosevelt and a picture of George Washington. Every school had a picture of Washington.



Flag and Map

Ada Bennett gave a sampler with words "God bless America".

#### CHAPTER IV HISTORICAL DATA



School in 1958

The first school in Chatsworth was built in 1858 on lots donated by William H. Osborn. This was the first school, not only in the village, but in the entire township. It stood east of



Leona Conibear Barnard's home on Ash street, between 4th and 5th streets on the north side of the street.

This was before Chatsworth was laid out as a village, before a single church was organized. From the school records, the first meeting was held at the home of John R. Snyder on the 12th of April 1858, when the town was still called Oliver's Grove.

The men met to pick a board of trustees. Franklin Oliver, Chatsworth's first white settler, J.H. Megquier and Franklin Foot were chosen. On the 20th of April 1858 the trustees held a meeting and elected William Jones, school treasurer.

William Jones must have been quite a guy, a real big wheel in village affairs. He was the first justice of peace, first school treasurer, first supervisor and probably the man who gave Chatsworth its name.

In 1857 the T.P. and W. railroad came through Chatsworth. People didn't like the double name "Oliver's Grove," a name the settlement had carried since the first white settler, Franklin Oliver had settled in Kickapoo Grove, south of town and had changed its name to his own. So the name was changed to "Chatsworth", named after the Duke of Devonshire's famous estate and castle in England, a man said to have had financial interests in the T.P. and W.



Last remains of a sign marking the site of the old depot. Sign torn down by vandals.

Some of the families who were living here in 1858 were Osborn, Stewart, Miller, Snyder, Brockway, Hart, Greenwood, Van Weir, Jones, Meredith, Harper, Harbert, Towner, Cranford.

The trustees wasted no time. In the summer of that same year, 1858, the school was built and the first term of school was taught by Miss Jennie Adams.



Old Grade School

Some time later, after the large new school was built in 1870, this building was moved to the country, one mile east on the south side of Route 24. There it served for many years as a country school house known to old timers as the "Beet Farm school" or "The Old Beet school". Later it was called the Wilson school, as it had Wilsons for pupils, a Wilson for a teacher and a Wilson for director. It was given the official name "Pleasant View." The town school, built in 1870, housed both grade and high school at first, then it served as a grade school until 1960, when the new elementary school was ready for occupancy by all pupils. Three grades had been moved in 1956.

From old newspapers in 1887, we find announced a school entertainment and lawn social was to be held at the Beet Farm school, district number 9. The reason it was called the Beet Farm school, was the sugar beet factory which was located on the old Pat Lawless property on the curve of old Route 24 (Gene Weber lives there now). People who worked in the sugar beet fields and in the factory lived in houses lining Route 24. This school served their children. When the beet factory closed and the workers moved away, the school continued to serve children of farm families.

Through the years many children went here, the Milsteads, the Wilsons, Lindquists, Hannas, Cooneys, Fords, Harmons, Rebholz, Sargeants, Gerdeses, Ashmans, Blairs, Brocks, Adamsons, Ratliffs, Friants, Schlemmers attended more recently. Catherine Kurtenbach taught there for 13 years.



School in 1894  
Picture contributed by  
Edna Sargeant

This was the school Oct. 16, 1894, with the teacher Susie Wilson and pupils, George Wilson, Mae Wilson, James Cooney, Jenney Cooney, James Ford, Wilford Cooney and Katie Cooney.

The school finally closed. Ann Weller was the last teacher. In 1947 the school held its last class, before consolidation of all the country schools into Dist. #1.

There is something sad about a school holding its last class or a church holding its last service. The writer recalls a book she read in French called "The Last Class in French". It was about a school in Alsace Lorraine, in between France and Germany, where they were always fighting. The Germans had won the last battle. The French teacher was leaving, a German teacher was coming. French would no longer be spoken, only German would be taught. The French professor was bidding his class goodbye. It was a sad story. So it must have been sad, the closing of these little schools that had been learning centers for the children's parents and grandparents. That fall, buses were added and pupils were brought to town under the consolidation plan.

There are many good arguments for consolidation, but there are arguments for the old country school too. How many of you attended a country school? We are sure its influence wasn't all bad.

With all 8 grades meeting in the same room, a youngster heard recitations over and over again, by the time he reached 8th grade. The older ones helped the younger ones. The writer recalled one of her former pupils, Lester Brock, telling that he sat with Elsie Stoutemyer, a co-teacher of the writer. He was in the first grade and Elsie was in the 8th. She helped him learn his colors and to color properly. Now, in some modern schools they are going back to the old idea of the country school, putting all ages together and having the older ones help the younger children.

Of course we think of the outside well, carrying water in a bucket and the old fashioned dipper or tin cup (loaded with germs) from which everyone drank. Not all schools even had a well. This one, it seems, never did. Some children had to go to the neighbors to get water.

Miss Fannie Pierce told a story of sending two boys after a bucket of water. They didn't come back for so long that she began to worry. Finally they came. They had stopped to chase a rabbit. They caught it, then they had to find a string to tie it. One brought the rabbit and the other the pail, (we don't know whether they remembered to bring the water or not) while the poor teacher waited and worried. She had to keep the rabbit for them until school was out.



Boys' Privy



Girls' Privy

The outdoor toilet or privy was sometimes a source of



trouble. Teachers were expected to treat the pupils with candy at Christmas time. Of course money for this came out of their meager salary and some didn't want to do it. We have heard that sometimes unruly pupils locked the teacher in the toilet and wouldn't let her out until she promised to treat. Toilets were always a target of Hallowe'en mischief and vandalism, an object to be upset or tipped over. That is the reason we didn't get privies for our little school, although several people offered them.

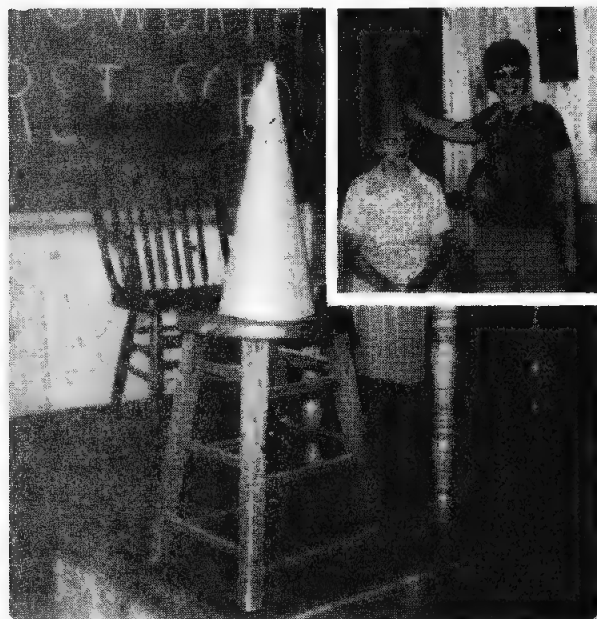
The teacher was expected to be her own janitor-sweep, keep the building clean, carry coal and cobs and build the fire, unless she could hire one of the older boys to do it for her.

My aunt, a country teacher in the early 1900's, sometimes rode a bicycle to school, sometimes she borrowed our "buckskin" pony and rode horseback, or many times she walked. When the weather was too severe she stayed with patrons in the district.

They had good times, however. She told of one year farmers were still husking corn on Thanksgiving day. No one could go anywhere, so they held school and all the families brought their dinner, potluck, for a fine Thanksgiving dinner at school with the teacher and pupils. They observed Thanksgiving together and were thankful for their bountiful harvest.

The last day of school usually ended with a picnic. During the year there were Christmas programs and entertainments for parents and directors on special occasions.

They laugh about the dunce stool and dunce cap. To us, this seems a cruel punishment, if a youngster couldn't learn. If he were just lazy, it might spur him on.



Dunce stool      Mary Scott wearing dunce cap placed on her head by Virginia Lee

Another favorite punishment was to draw a ring on the blackboard and require the culprit to stand on tiptoe with his

nose in the ring. In the day of double seats, it was considered punishment to make a misbehaving boy go sit with a girl.

They wrote on slates with a slate pencil. As the song "School Days" says, "You wrote on my slate I love you, Joe,". The slate had its advantages. If you didn't want the teacher to see it, you could erase it in a hurry before she got there.

The more affluent schools had an organ and if the teacher or one of the older pupils could play, the children enjoyed singing every day and presenting programs.

At recess and noon everyone went outside and all the children played together. It had to be a game the little ones could play as well as the older ones. Black man, town ball, wood tag, prisoner's base were favorites. Many times the teacher joined in and played with them. They were called in at the sound of the teacher's hand bell.

We've heard that some teachers kept a bundle of switches to use on the unruly ones. I recall a teacher using a wide wooden paddle on a "big bad boy" and whacking so hard she broke the paddle. Pieces flew and we all ducked we were so scared.

There were no hot lunches. Everyone carried a dinner pail, probably a syrup bucket. This was before the day of brown baggers. One lady said her family was poor and they carried lunch in a syrup bucket. The "rich" kids had special dinner pails, but these cost 15c. Another woman said they carried a gallon syrup bucket and the whole family used the same pail for lunch. Here was a place of real discrimination. The wealthier ones had cake, store-bread sandwiches, maybe a banana, while the poorer ones had cold cornbread and a slab of fat pork.

The more up-to-date schools were lighted with kerosene lamps for night functions. Social activities centered around the school with spelling bees, ciphering matches, singing schools, entertainments and an occasional box social or pie supper. Did you ever attend a pie supper? I went to one once. I spent the weekend with a girl friend down in the country. Her older sister taught country school and as a money making event, they were having a pie supper on Friday night. The mother of my friend had baked a pie for each of us girls. Mine was a luscious big thick butterscotch pie, heaped high with meringue.

The pies were auctioned off and young men bought them, then they ate with the girl who brought the pie. A young man from some place in Indiana bought my pie. (we were just across the line from Indiana). He was a nice young fellow, but real shy and bashful. Believe it or not, so was I, then. I remember cutting us each a slab of pie. I think he ate two pieces. I don't remember what happened to the rest of the pie, but we all had a good time and did raise money for the school.

Box socials were money raisers too. We notice the big dictionary was purchased for Dist. 251 with money raised from a box social in 1930. Catherine Kurtenbach tells more about the box social in her interview.

School houses served as a meeting place for church services too. The Methodist, Presbyterian and Evangelical

all mentioned meeting in the school house. Cora Hamilton, an early teacher, held Sunday School there on Sunday afternoons for the beet farm children and their parents.

## CHAPTER V CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE ROOM SCHOOL

What, if anything did the one room school contribute? Bill Pearson once said you learned by repetition and by the time you reached the 8th grade history class, you had already heard it seven times. You were pretty stupid, if you didn't know it by then. Of course Bill was a good history student and liked history.

Some of these country schools were quite large, especially during the winter term. Sarah Dorsey, one of the Dorsey Sisters, and an early teacher in the Chatsworth area, said she had had as many as 60 pupils in all eight grades.

Children acquired the power of concentration. They had to shut out other sounds in order to concentrate on their own work. One lady told the writer she became so absorbed in a story she was reading, she had to be called several times to come up to the front to recite for another class.

They also learned cooperation and helpfulness, with the older ones assisting the younger, teaching them to draw and color, write their a-b-c's and do their numbers, while the teacher had her hands full with another class up at the recitation bench.

Ordinarily in the country school there were fewer children, so they all had to play together to make enough for a ball team. The older ones not only had to teach the little ones, they had to be tolerant and put up with their mistakes. They learned integration and democracy without even knowing the meaning of the words, by practicing them every day. There was none of that, "she can't play with us, she's a GIRL" or "don't let Herbie play, he's too little. He'll make an out."

Sometimes a pupil was alone in his grade. We've known youngsters who went all through grade school without any competition. One person did all the reciting. This amounted to a private tutor for him and he could advance at his own rate. The teacher sometimes gave him extra books to read if she had them, or he might even advance to the next class, skipping a grade.

Pupils sometimes played tricks on the teacher, hiding behind their geography book, which was conveniently large. It made an excellent shield for a more interesting story book, for note writing, or manufacturing paper wads to be thrown when the teacher wasn't looking.

The teacher really knew her pupils. She lived in their homes. She played with them at recess. She even shared her lunch with them. The country teacher was a jack of all trades, music teacher, athletic director, school nurse for the injured, dramatics coach for entertainments, janitor, and disciplinarian, in addition to regular duties teaching all 8 grades.

Yes, we believe something was lost to American society, when the one-room country schools disappeared from our

culture, for they made a unique contribution to our heritage and we pay tribute to the early country school teacher. She was a hardy soul, she had to be to survive.

This poem was written about the demolition of the old grade school, that served the community for 90 years.

## GRANDFATHER'S SCHOOL

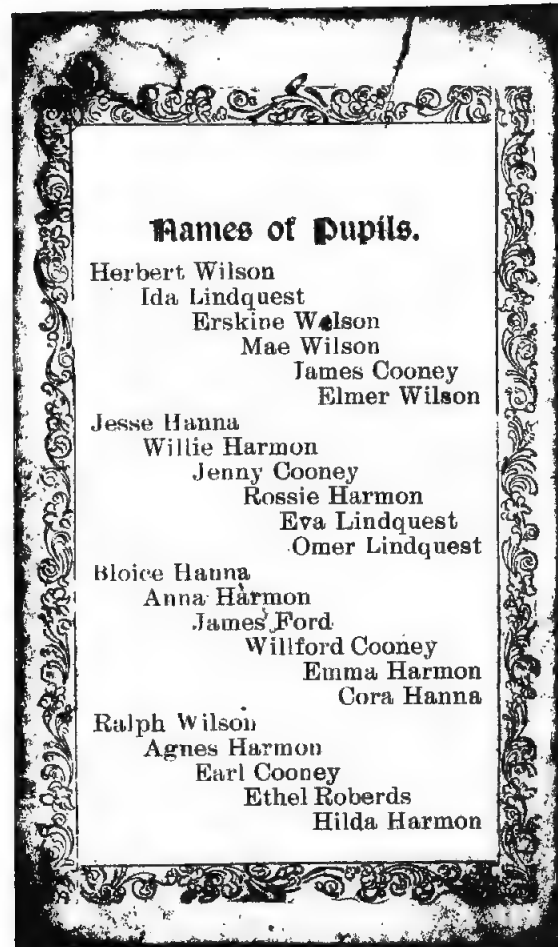
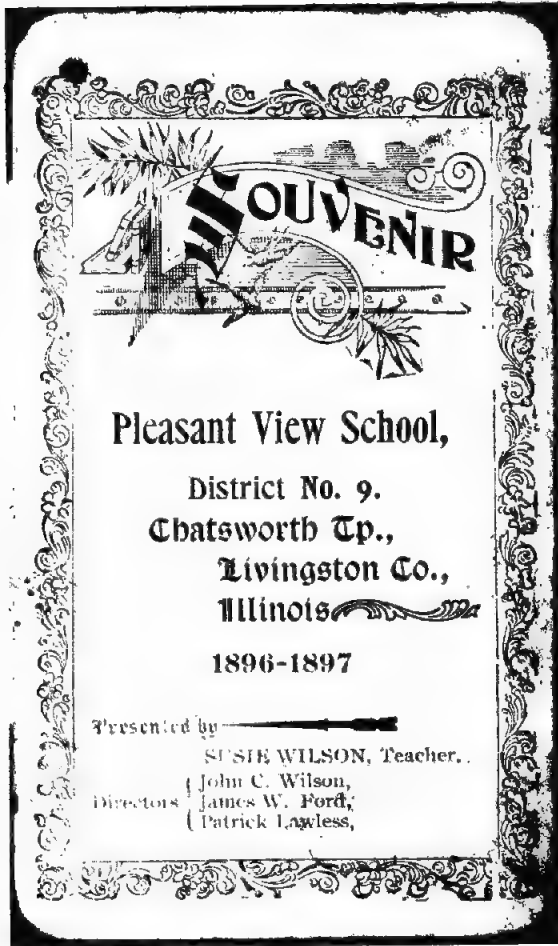
Oh Grandfather's school was the finest in its day,  
And it stood 90 years in our town.  
The stairs curled about in a circular way,  
And the banisters oft he slid down.  
It opened on the morn of the day that he was born,  
The bell was his treasure and pride.  
But 'twas silenced forever—never to ring again  
On the day the old man died.  
90 years without grumbling-ding-dong, ding-dong!  
90 years without mumbling-ding-dong, ding-dong!  
It stopped short—never to ring again,  
When the old man died.

Oh Grandfather's school, built three stories tall,  
And its color, a dark chocolate brown.  
But older it grew and 'twas doomed to fall,  
So its walls had to come tumbling down.  
'Twas the first day of spring, when the bell ceased to ring  
And the halls once so lively and gay,  
Were silent and dead, all the pupils had fled,  
As Grandfather's life ebbed away.  
90 years of children's laughter, ding-dong, ding-dong!  
Only silence hereafter, ding-dong, ding-dong!  
But the ghosts of the past, hover 'round till the last,  
Since the school and Grandad are gone.

H.L.P.S.



CHAPTER VI  
IN RETROSPECT



Souvenir of 1896—From Lilla Wilson, Piper City

INTERVIEWS WITH PUPILS, TEACHERS,  
PARENTS OF DISTRICT 251

Gladys Milstead Rosendahl was a pupil in this school for her first three years. She recalled going to school at age 5 to see what it was like. She had no book and had to sit with a boy to share his book. Gladys remembered how embarrassed she was, because the other children laughed at her for sitting with a boy.

Her first teacher, Miss Coughlin, was a rather gruff person, or seemed so to a new little beginner. She taught the children the Lord's prayer which they repeated every morning. (Now it's forbidden to pray the Lord's prayer in school.)

Gladys especially remembered a chart they used to help learn the a-b-c's. There were about 12 to 15 pupils in school in the early 1900's. Gladys remembered the school with trees all around it, the school yard set off by a white wooden fence with a stile.

The school east, near the county line, came to the Beet school to share the annual picnic and the boys from the two schools got in a fight over the stile.

One of Gladys' most painful memories was of her shyness. The day of the picnic was quite warm and she didn't have a hat. Her mother said she must wear her brother's sailor hat, much to her embarrassment. Then she was to recite a piece at the entertainment. She was so bashful, and although she knew her piece, she thought she simply couldn't do it, so she ran all the way home, in spite of being chased by her older sister.

The teacher apparently felt sorry for what happened, because she brought Gladys some home-made ice cream from the picnic, but she was so ashamed of what she had done, she hid under the porch and wouldn't come out. The rest of the family ate the melting ice cream and the little girl lost out entirely.

The big girls in school dressed like adults. They wore shirt waists and long skirts and had their hair done up on top of

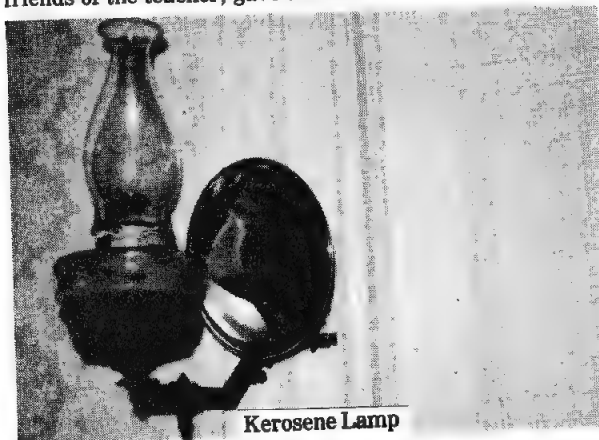
their heads. One day two of the big girls got in a fight. They savagely pulled down the opponent's hair and ripped off her long skirt in their anger.

Another memory was of a mountaineer family from Tennessee who moved into the district. The boys carried knives. She remembered seeing a Tennessee boy hurl a knife and pin a sparrow to the board fence. That trick really impressed the prairie-dwellers, for after all that was pretty neat throwing. Her parents forbade her to associate with the Tennesseans. Perhaps they feared she might get pinned to the fence by a knife wielding admirer.

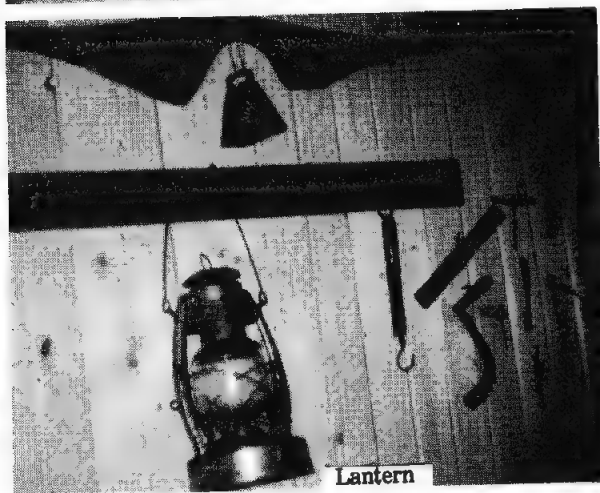
Water was a scarce commodity. Getting it was difficult, so the children were taught not to waste it. They took a drink from the community dipper, and if there was any water left, they poured it back in the bucket. They were being taught conservation back then, but for a different reason.

Gladys moved and attended another school, but she wanted an education. She went on to become a teacher at the tender age of 17, and to teach in other country schools.

Catherine Kurtenbach was a teacher in district 251 from 1928-1941. Upon inquiry, she told about the box social. These functions were held at night at the school. Teacher and neighbors brought gasoline lamps, kerosene lamps or lanterns. The school never was wired for electricity. The children put on a program, then some young people, usually friends of the teacher, gave a little skit or two.



Kerosene Lamp



Lantern

She recalled a box social at a neighboring school. (the Stoutemyer school) The roads were so muddy, the cars couldn't get through. They had two teams and wagons that met folks at the slab and hauled them a mile east to the school.

The girls prepared the boxes of food and decorated them to look pretty. They were auctioned off by number to the boys and men. She recalled one patron, a bachelor, had great fun buying several boxes. He would run up the price on the "boy friend". Then he'd take the pick of the boxes. When he knew with whom he would eat, he'd sell all the boxes he didn't want.

Catherine said on a good night a social would bring in \$35 or \$40. The school enrollment varied from 6 to 20. They carried water from a well about an eighth of a mile away. In bad weather she brought water from home in a milk can.

The school had a jacketed furnace. The teacher carried in the cobs and coal from a shed at the rear. She recalled one time she banked the fire too much. In the night it went pouf! blew the furnace door open and scattered soot and ashes all over. The next day the students had a vacation, while the teacher and her parents cleaned up the mess.

They had no musical instrument at that school, so the teacher brought a little hand cranked victrola and played records.

At recess they played circle games, hide and seek, Andy-i-over, and ball. The teacher played with them to see to it the little ones had a chance to play. If the school happened to be near a pond, they would sometimes skip recess and all go to the pond for a long noon hour to skate. Other games were pom-pom-pull away, Mother, may I? Pussy wants a corner, and Redlight.

The few books they had in the library were read over and over again. County superintendents W.W. McCulloch, T.M. Harrell and H.W. McCulloch came to visit, as did the county nurse. She checked the eyes and ears of the pupils.

Dinner was brought in a syrup bucket. She recalled one day a boy choked on a plum seed. He couldn't breathe. She pounded him on the back and poked her fingers down his throat to relieve his breathing. Then the seed stuck in his esophagus and he couldn't swallow. She ran to the nearest neighbor with a telephone, called the boy's father who came and took the boy to the doctor to get the seed removed.

She remarked how helpless the country teacher was. There was no one to call for help. She said THAT teacher was pretty much a wreck for the rest of the day, after such a bad fright.

As this school was on the hard road and the period was "depression days", tramps often spent the night there. They would crawl in a window to sleep where it was nice and warm. Next morning she'd sometimes find a note on the black board, thanking her for the warm fire she had left.

At Christmas the teacher treated the children with candy and at the school picnic she furnished the ice cream.

Catherine recalled the many chores, carrying in cobs and coal, pouring a bucket of water down each chemical toilet every day, sweeping the floor with sweeping compound, and



dusting erasers. She said she drove to this school with a car, but at a previous school she drove a horse and cart to get through the mud.

year with all the mothers present. Ann remembered the floors were cold. They all sat around the stove in the morning with their feet up to try and get warm. Mondays were the



*Pleasant View - Dist. 251, Oct. 1, 1933.*

1. Orland Brock 2. Leroy Gerdes 3. Carl Brock, Teacher-Catherine Kurtenbach 4. Leota Mae Brock 5. John Gerdes 6. Earl Spence 7. Ada Brock 8. Raymond Adams 9. Jim Rebholz 10. Leo Gerdes 11. Hazel Brock 12. Glenn Booker 13. Dorothy Spence.

Geraldine Rebholz taught Pleasant View School from 1943-1945. She had an enrollment of 20 with all eight grades. Her pupils came from nine families. This school had a Hallowe'en party in 1943 with the Kerber school taught by Eileen Rebholz.

The second year four families moved out of the district and two pupils graduated, leaving four families with only 7 children in school.

Ann Weller was the last teacher District 251 had. She taught from 1945 to 1947. The last year she had a small school, eight pupils. She finished the year for a teacher who was getting married.

She had a picture taken on picnic day at the end of the

worst. After the cold weekend, it didn't warm up until noon.

She recalled Betty Ashman and Richard Sargeant were in the same grade and they worked hard competing with each other.

The records from these country schools were brought to town when the school closed and three years later there was a sale of all country school furniture, school buildings and land.

Betty Ashman Gillette was a student in Dist. 251 for four years. She thought they had 7 of the eight grades. Lucile Kueffner, Geraldine Rebholz, Eileen Rebholz and Ann Weller were her teachers. She said the pupils all wore bib overalls and the mothers got together and made them red flannel shirts. Maybe the schoolhouse wasn't red, but the shirts were. She remembered the teacher played with them so they would have enough to play ball.

Mrs. John Gerdes Sr. was one of the parents in Dist. 251 and wife of a school director. They moved to the district in the spring of 1925. They lived about a mile from the school

and her children walked to school. The boys would get ahead and little sister, Helen, would have to run to catch up. Mrs. Gerdes remembered fixing five lunch buckets at one time. She said she wondered later how the food kept with no refrigerator, but the food was all home prepared. She frequently baked cookies for the children and often tucked in a little "surprise" in their lunch bucket. She recalled her children often traded food from their dinner buckets with other children.

She said the parents sometimes met to discuss school lunches, talk about the nutrition, what to pack, and how to wrap the lunches.

She knew they had Christmas programs, but she recalled more vividly the school picnic at the close of school. One year the farmers needed rain, it had been quite dry, until the day of the school picnic, then they had a downpour. They joked and said the next time they needed rain, they would plan a school picnic.

Mrs. Gerdes recalled the teachers came to see the directors about getting a job, then the directors met, decided on which teacher to hire, fixed the salary, and tended to other school matters.

She said when the threshing crew finished their run, they all went to the schoolhouse for a big potluck picnic dinner, with lemonade, homemade ice cream and all the trimmings. This was a kind of community event.

The teachers said when they taught in the country school, pay checks were not delivered. When the check was due, the teacher had to go after it, and if the director wasn't home she had to go back, maybe several times until she finally collected her pay.

Some schools had barrel-shaped stone water jugs. If the teacher forgot to empty the jug, and the weather turned cold, it froze the water and burst the jug, then it was the teacher who paid for a new one.

Linda Hana Sheeley was interviewed by letter and later she came to visit. She attended school four years at the Beet school before the family moved to town, where she started in the fifth grade. She started to school, as many did, when she was five. Her teachers were Anstein Coughlin, sister of Billy Coughlin, the jeweler here, and Nellie Duffy.

She recalled the Wilsons, the Fords, her own brothers and sister, the Merrels, Floyd Wilson and later the Milsteads as schoolmates. She mentioned when children were needed on the farm they stayed home and worked, so she wasn't in school much with the older ones, although all finished the 8th grade, even though it took them more than eight years. The teachers must have had a problem, she thought.

Linda said at times there were as few as five pupils, sometimes more. She knew they had the usual programs and basket socials, but she didn't recall anything special. Someone made a merry-go-round and a teeter-totter by bolting a plant to a post. It would go around or up and down. Linda thought it was wonderful.

They had no buses. The Hannas lived a mile north and a half mile east of the school. She walked most of the time and did not pass a single home. Sometimes she rode a large pony to school, with instructions to put the reins over the saddle



Linda Hanna Sheeley

horn so the pony couldn't graze, then give it a slap and head it for home. Once her father needed the pony team to make his calls as a veterinarian. One of her brothers put Linda on a big gray farm horse with the usual instructions. About ¼ of a mile down the road, the horse spied a ditch with muddy water. The big old horse ran straight for the water and lay down. Fearing she was going to roll, Linda got off fast. Then the horse got up and the little girl led her home, crying all the way. No school for her that day!

She thought the "Little Red Schoolhouse" seemed an appropriate name, but she said as long as she could remember it was neither white or red, but a mustard yellow. Most schools around here were white.

Lucile Kueffner Sharkey taught in the Pleasant View school from 1941-1943. She had four families, the Adamsons, Ratliffs, Gerdeses and Sargeants, with eight pupils in all.

Lucile recalled having a little kerosene stove. Through government surplus, she obtained pinto beans and prunes. She cooked these on her little stove and gave them to the children. This was her "hot lunch" program.

She remembered going to Herb Wilson, director, for her pay check. H.W. McCulloch, county superintendent, and Victor Lindquist, assistant superintendent, visited at school. She said at times she had only five pupils. She recalled they had no well at school and had to carry water from some farm house.

Jim Rebholz was another student in Dist. 251. He actually lived in Ford County, but there wasn't much argument in those days and students traded back and forth across district, even county lines, regardless of where they lived. He attended 7 years here between 1932 and 1939. Catherine Kurtenbach was his teacher. He and Earl Spence were classmates. There were about 12 to 17 in school at one time, he thought.

He recalled they celebrated every holiday with a party



and the teacher brought treats. At Christmas they gave a play and the parents came. The school picnic was the big event of the year. Everybody in the district came to that.

The school had no musical instrument, but the teacher brought her little victrola and they sang or squeaked along with the records, as he didn't think any of them possessed operatic voices.

In the spring they sometimes visited other country schools and had a ball game. He said they were bashful and scared to meet 12 new kids. He remembered when he came to high school, he was scared to death.

They played prisoner's base and Andy-i-over, tossing the ball over the schoolhouse. They had a volley ball, but no net. In the winter they went skating on the frozen ditch, no skates, just with their shoes.

Christmas vacation was usually only 1 day, not more than 2 or 3, never a week, because they wanted to get out by the fourth week in April, as they ran an 8 months school.

He walked to school and was joined by Leroy, John, and Leo Gerdes. Herbie Schuler was a good friend, who gave him a dog. He proudly took it home, but he had to take it back as he was allergic to dogs.

Jim remembered one Christmas when Santa Claus came. In the excitement, someone upset a dish of candy. The candy flew in all directions. They all got down on the oiled floor, picked up the candy and put it back in the dish. No one thought anything about it, except the teacher, who was probably horrified.

He recalled they had no well. He said he thought the teacher brought the water or they went across the road to Friants for water. He carried a dinner bucket. He remembered he had peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, dried beef (the real salty kind), apples, grapes and home-made cookies, no twinkies, and one time he had plums. He was the boy who choked on the plum seed. That happened when he was a sixth grader. He said he never forgot it and he bet the teacher didn't forget it either. (Right! She didn't.)

On graduation day from the 8th grade, the ceremony was simple. He went to the mailbox and picked up his diploma. That was all there was to it.

Kay Sargeant Favorite wrote a theme her freshman year in college about her school days, leaving the country school and going to town by school bus. She wrote "Before this momentous occasion I had had to walk half a mile to attend a one-room country school which bore the name Pleasant View. Pleasant View had an enrollment of seven students who were taught by a "school marm", who was a former WAC (Ann Weller). The old school consisted of one large room with two cloak rooms. In comparison to the new and modern schools, the room was bare and contained only the minimum necessities, which enabled it to be called a school. Outside, the playground consisted of the old cob-shed, merry-go-round and water pump. With such equipment one had to use his imagination to think of ways to entertain himself, and this we did without much trouble." She went on to describe her first day riding on the bus and her arrival at town school.



Spinning Wheel that belonged to "Grandma" Fitzhenry mother of Mrs. William Cording  
Now a museum item - it was well over 100 years old at the time of her death in 1937.

One of the unusual things about this school district was it had a woman director. Mrs. Julius Blair served as director prior to 1947.

Lial Wilson was another student at the Little School. He lived a mile south and three fourths of a mile west, on the Sam Puffer place. He started to school here in the first grade and attended between 1913 and 1919. He remembered two teachers, Mabel Moore and a Miss McNeff from Fairbury. He thought about 15 to 20 pupils attended when he did. He was able to name about 13 of them.

Lial had two brothers, Harold and Elmer, sons of William Wilson. He remembered carrying water from a neighboring well, but when state inspectors found it was a reservoir well, they declared it unsafe. So a well was dug at the school, near the road and the last few years of the school's existence it did have a pump as mentioned by Kay Sargeant.

The school was called "Gypsy Center", Lial recalled, in his time, because it was a favorite camp ground for gypsies passing through. They would come in the building and sleep on the floor at night. They would leave during the day, while school was in session and go up by the railroad tracks, then return at night to sleep in the schoolhouse. Lial's family moved from here to Onarga.

## CHAPTER VII STORY OF CORA HAMILTON

Cora Hamilton was a pioneer woman school teacher, teaching her first school at the Beet School about 1870.

She was 17 years old, just out of high school and had passed the teacher's examination to get a certificate. The Beet school then had a reputation of being "big and tough" and it lived up to its name. She had 57 pupils, 10 of them older than she.

The school had foreigners, brought here to work in the sugar beets. They were German, Swedish and Irish. The previous teacher, a man, had been smoked out, literally. The big boys climbed on the roof, put a board on the chimney and smoked the teacher out because he wouldn't give them a holiday. When he tried to punish a big boy, they ganged up on him and ducked him in the creek. He quit.

She said she was such a fool, she didn't know enough to be afraid. Discipline worried her. She had been taught to respect her parents, and teachers and absolute obedience was required. Unfortunately her pupils had not all learned that lesson. She made a rule "no fighting on the school ground." The Germans and Swedes accepted this, but not the Irish. They loved to fight. Within a few days two big fellows, nearly 6 feet tall, were battling it out in a fight to the finish. Without stopping to think she ran between them and took a blow intended for the opponent. It knocked her out. They were frightened. They thought she was dead, but she was only stunned. But the big boys decided since the "Little Teacher" didn't know any better than to run in to stop a fight, she might get killed, so the fighting better stop and it did.

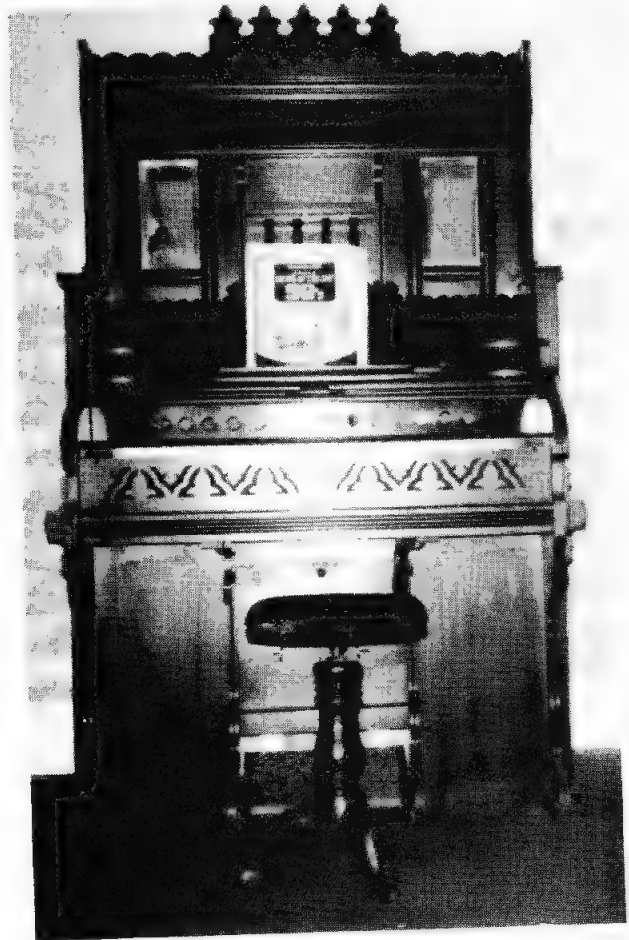
She brought her own organ to school and invited parents to hear their essays, poems and songs. Everyone had to recite. One Friday a big fellow refused to recite his poem. She said he must stay after school until he recited it. He thought she would get tired waiting, but she stuck it out. Finally as it was getting dark, he recited his poem. Then he escorted her home as he was afraid for her to be on the road after night. Her father thought there must be a better way to discipline 19 year old young men.

Her most embarrassing moment occurred her first year. A farmer near the school lost his wife. He was trying to farm and care for two boys, the youngest only five years old. The school board granted permission for little Frank to come to school in spite of the large enrollment. This would have been fine except he was a most mischievous five year old. Finally Miss Hamilton said, "if you disturb again, I'm going to shake you real hard."

It wasn't 10 minutes until he had crawled under the seats and tied the shoe strings of several pupils together so they fell when they tried to get up.

No guardian angel told Cora Hamilton that little Frank's pants were held up by one button and that button was held by one thread. When she made good her threat, the thread gave way, so did the button, so did the pants. Fortunately he was wearing his older brother's shirt that came down below his knees. The older boys were all discreetly hiding behind their geographies.

The room was still as a grave yard. Miss Hamilton said to



Old pump organ originally belonged to Mrs. James Cording

the older boy, "take your brother to the cloak room and put on his trousers." In a minute the door opened and Will called out, "Teacher, I ain't got no pin". That was too much. The whole room burst out laughing and the teacher was forced to join in.

An aftermath of this incident concerned a young man, 21 years old, who had been refused permission by the school board to attend school. He wrote a note to Miss Hamilton saying he had reconsidered the matter of becoming her pupil as he heard her discipline was dangerous.

In her second year at the Beet school, she had a boy, who had been expelled from Peoria for knocking the teacher down. He had come out to Chatsworth to live with his uncle and go to school. He was bright and liked to learn, but he was cruel to the little children. One day he hurt one quite severely. She said he would have to be punished. She'd try to hurt him as he hurt others. He laughed. How could a little wisp like her hurt a big fellow like him? Before he could think, she grabbed a ruler and whacked him hard across the knuckles. He started to strike her, but a growl from the older boys stopped him. She told him to stay after school as they would settle matters.



When others were gone she talked to him. She said she was sorry, but he'd have to leave school since the directors had given her power to dismiss pupils who defied her authority. She said "Pack your books and go". He said he'd go, but he wouldn't pack his books. She said, "If you don't take them, I'll throw them out in the road after you."

To her surprise, he begged to stay. He said he had never liked school before. If she would let him stay he'd never trouble her again. They shook hands and stepped to the cloak room. There on a bench sat her father, a horse whip across his knees, and two older boys with baseball clubs. They had feared he would kill the Little Teacher and had gone for her father.

The Irish Catholics went to church regularly, but the Germans and Swedes were Lutherans. There was no church of their faith so they didn't go to church. Often they danced late on Saturday night and slept most of Sunday.

Of course she had to do something about that, so she organized a Sunday School to meet Sunday afternoon in the schoolhouse. It made a place to go in the dull lives of the foreigners. To her surprise not only children came, but their parents also. She could teach the women, but the men were beyond her, so her father took a hand. She suspected that he taught history and politics, but she was too busy to know about it.

For music, she played the organ and taught them gospel hymns. A favorite they always called for was "Hold the Fort for I am Coming".

Ho! my comrades, see the signal, waving in the sky!  
Reinforcements now appearing, victory is nigh!

CHORUS:  
"Hold the fort, for I am coming," Jesus signals still  
Wave the answer back to Heaven, "By thy grace we will."

See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on;  
Mighty men around us falling, courage almost gone.

See the glorious banner waving, hear the bugle blow,  
In our Leader's name we'll triumph, over every foe.

Fierce and long the battle rages, but our help is near;  
Onward comes our Great Commander, cheer, my comrades, cheer!

Courtesy of Alice Albright

The Irish liked the singing and they came too. The law then allowed the Lord's Prayer and Bible reading in school. A priest came to visit her and said the Lord's Prayer was Catholic as well as Protestant, but only certain parts of the Bible could be read. So they sat down and he told her what portions she could read and she marked them in her Bible.

He said his superiors would object if they knew he allowed Catholic children to attend Sunday School, but he agreed they were better off there than getting into mischief, so he made a deal with her. If she would come to his church with the children when they studied for first communion, he would let

them come to Sunday School. She agreed to this arrangement.

She spoke of tramps sleeping in the school and using up all her kindling and letting the fire go out. She said "at the close of my third year at the Beet Farm school, the farms were sold and the tenants moved away. By that time the county superintendent rated me a good disciplinarian and sent me to another big bad school."

Miss Hamilton moved to Pontiac and taught in the Pontiac area. She was assistant county superintendent and acting county superintendent in Livingston county. She finally became head of the training school at Western Illinois, Macomb.

## CHAPTER VIII VISITORS TO THE LITTLE SCHOOL

The first visitors to the Little School were members of the Chatsworth Homemakers Extension Association. Sept. 2, 1975 they held a "last day" of school program. They wore long dresses, brought their lunch in dinner pails, and recited from old readers and geographies.



On porch-ready for school



Eating picnic lunch from dinner pails, Katherine Ruppel, Edith Zorn, Margaret Endres, Ruth Kerber.

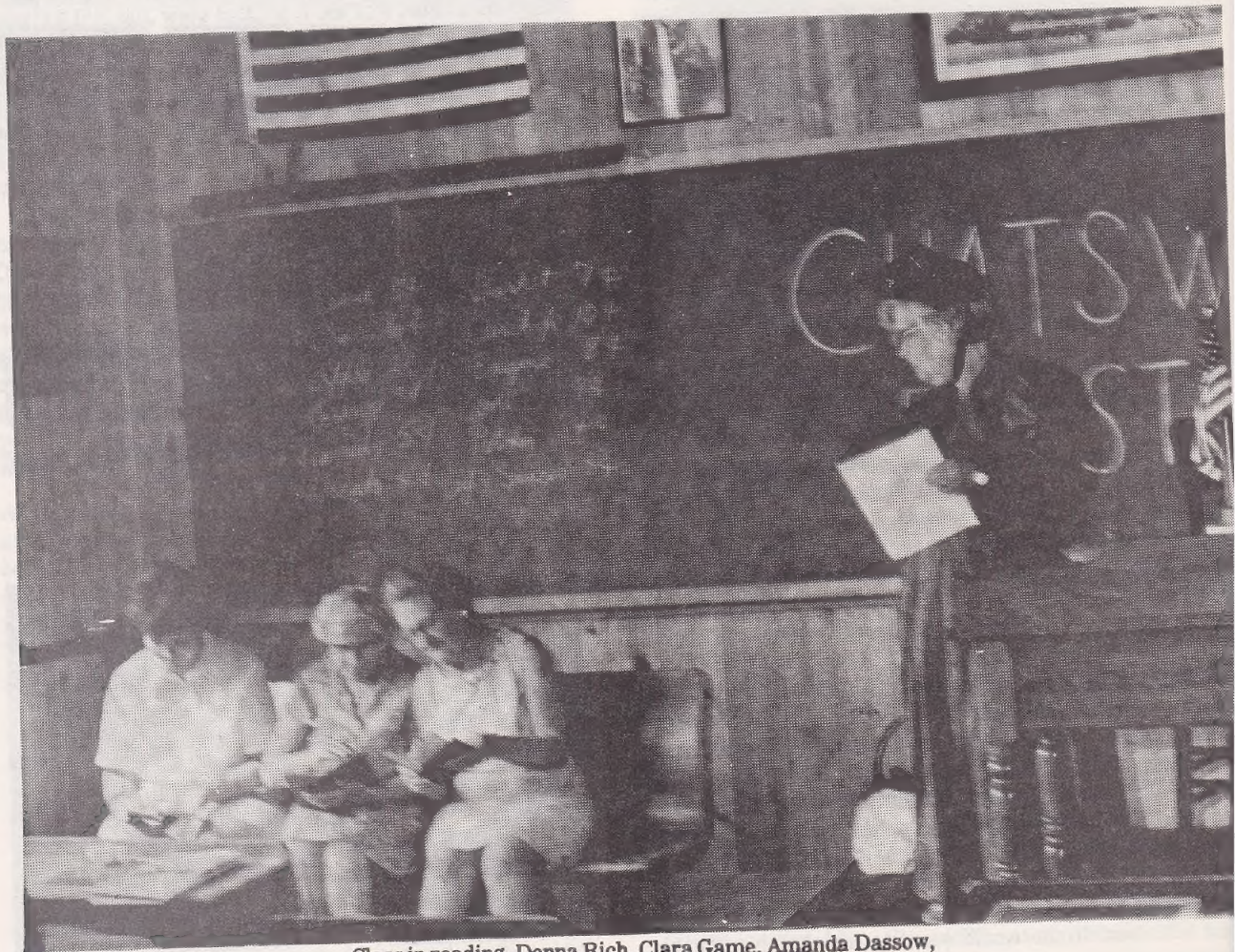




Nellie Ruppel and Gladys Rosendahl reading from primers

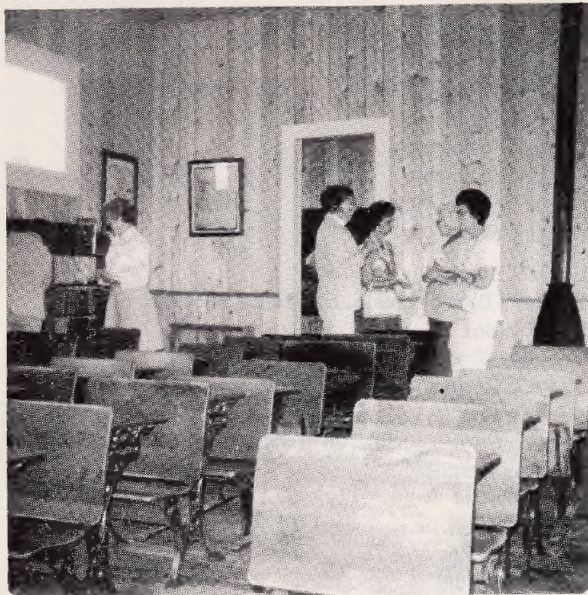


Studying-Edith Zorn, Loretta Barker, Viola Augsburger, Sandy Hummel, Ruth Kerber.



Class in reading. Donna Rich, Clara Game, Amanda Dassow, Teacher - Louise Stoutemyer.





Woman's Club

The second group to visit was the Chatsworth Woman's Club. They had lunch Sept. 10 at CAPS barn and toured the school in the afternoon.

On September 30 three drivers, three helpers and two greeters met with a group from Greenbrier Lodge. They were given the story of the Little School as they sat in the seats and reminisced. They had their pictures taken and were given little treats.

On Oct. 23 Past County presidents of the Woman's Club



On tour Sept. 10

were visitors and on Saturday Nov. 8 the Little School played host for the Delta Kappa Gamma, teacher's organization. Approximately fifty teachers visited school that day.

An open house and dedication is planned for Sunday June 6, 1976 as part of Chatsworth's bicentennial program.

So much for the past, now let us look to the future. It is hoped this building will be kept up and preserved by the CAPS board, with the aid of a trust fund, as a museum to be enjoyed, and a repository for items that have significance to this community.



Group from Greenbrier Lodge, Piper City





# LIST OF KNOWN TEACHERS

1. Jennie Adams 1858
2. Cora Hamilton circa 1870
3. Susie Wilson 1894
4. Annstie Coughlin 1903
5. Nellie Duffy
6. Lula Kane 1915
7. Katherine Hart 1920
8. Mabel Moore
9. Mabel Ford 1926
10. Catherine Kurtenbach 1928-1941
11. Lucile Kueffner 1941-1943
12. Geraldine Rebholz 1943-1945
13. Eileen Rebholz
14. Anna Weller 1947

## LIST OF PUPILS KNOWN TO ATTEND THIS SCHOOL.

1. George Wilson 1894
2. James Ford
3. Katie Cooney
4. Herbert Wilson 1896
5. Ida Lindquist
6. Erskine Wilson
7. Mae Wilson
8. James Cooney
9. Elmer Wilson
10. Jesse Hanna
11. Willie Harmon
12. Jenny Cooney
13. Rossie Harmon
14. Eva Lindquist
15. Omer Lindquist
16. Bloice Hanna
17. Cora Hanna
18. Ralph Wilson
19. Agnes Harmon
20. Earl Cooney
21. Ethel Roberds
22. Anna Harmon
23. Wilford Cooney
24. Emma Harmon
25. Linda Hanna 1903
26. Opal Merrill
27. Dutch (Floyd) Wilson
28. Owen Merrill
29. Jim Lawless
30. Patricius Lawless
31. Tom Ford
32. Roscoe Milstead
33. Carl Milstead
34. Gladys Milstead
35. Lial Wilson
36. Harold Wilson
37. Elmer Wilson
38. George Johnson
39. Francis Johnson
40. Martin Johnson
41. Mino Johnson
42. Gustave Johnson
43. Elma Bergan
44. James Bergan
45. Tom Bergan
46. Klaus Frederick
47. Leona Lehman
48. Carl Brock 1928 - 1941
49. Mae Brock
50. Hazel Brock
51. Orland Brock - children of Walter Brock family
52. Ada Brock
53. Walter Brock Jr.
54. Orend Gerdes
55. Lester Gerdes
56. Anton Gerdes children of John Gerdes family
57. Leroy Gerdes
58. Leo Gerdes
59. John Gerdes Jr.
60. Allen Gerdes
61. Helen Gerdes
62. Jim Rebholz - son of Ed Rebholz
63. Frieda Loudermilk
64. Teddy Loudermilk - children of Clem Spence family
65. Earl Spence
66. Dorothy Spence
67. Hilda Cohernour
68. Bernice Cohernour
69. Lee Cohernour
70. Ernest Cohernour - children of Harvey Cohernour family
71. Elery Perkins
72. Raymond Adams - children of Elisha Perkins family
73. Glen Booker
74. Charle Booker
75. Wayne Booker - Charles Booker family
76. Vera Friant
77. Frederick Friant
78. Jim Friant - John Friant family
79. Frances Ratliff
80. Helen Ratliff
81. Marjeen Ratliff - Ira Ratliff family
82. Kenneth Ratliff
83. Junior Ratliff
84. Herbert Schuler - Ulrich Schuler
85. Robert Spence
86. Arlen Frick
87. Wayne Dubree
88. Genevieve Dubree
89. Betty Ashman
90. Esther Spence
91. Elsie Dubree
92. Clarence Dubree
93. Joanne Frick
94. Bernice Dubree
95. Dorothy Frick
96. Lauren Blair
97. Janet Adamson
98. Dolores Adamson



99. Geraldine Blair
100. Ellyn Blair
101. Gerry Ashman
102. Richard Sargeant
103. Roger Sargeant
104. Kay Sargeant
105. Ray Schlemmer

#### KNOWN DIRECTORS

1. Franklin Oliver
2. J.H. Megquier
3. Franklin Foot
4. John C. Wilson
5. James W. Ford
6. Patrick Lawless
7. Margury Blair
8. Herbert Wilson
9. Walter Brock
10. John Gerdes
11. Elisha Perkins
12. John Friant
13. Wayne Sargeant